

Pasta What?



Each year, at some point around Winter Break, my husband and I make a Moses like pilgrimage to Southern Florida. I like to call it our trip to the Promised Land. When you live in Chicago there is no clearer way to see evidence of Gd than to leave a 3 degree place and arrive in a 75 degree place, so there is no better name for our trip. No we aren't independently wealthy. We're just incredibly lucky. My man's parents have a time share and each year the entire family rushes down for a few days of sitting by the pool, marathon movie trips and eating like we're in a contest at the county fair. Each year I end up finding something that I'm newly obsessed with food wise. For the last several years it has been garlic rolls. Weird, right? This year though something new happened. I accidentally tried Pasta e Fagioli.

I'm sorry, what did you call me?

Pasta e Fagioli. It's pronounced (at least in the States) Pasta Vadjool.

Pasta e Fagioli Soup. Have you heard of it? It means Pasta and Beans. Wikipedia tells me that it's an old Italian peasant dish. You guys, that is my very favorite thing. Poor folks are resourceful. I mean, aren't we?? They make delicious and easy food. Especially poor folks from the past, who also happened to be Italian. Like, dang, give me a break.

Anywho. I had the soup a couple times at different Italian restaurants in the Promised Land (ie Southern Florida). I decided that my goal when I got back to Chicago would be to figure out how to make this magical soup so that I could share it with you...and my little family.

I'm going to take a moment and brag. I'm getting pretty good at improvising recipes. I'm at least getting a little brave. When I looked up the recipe for Pasta e Fagioli Soup in various recipes in books and online what I saw made me tired. Fry bacon fat? No. Fry fat back and mash it into a mush. NO! What follows is my improvised version of a Mario Batali recipe.

What:

2 medium Spanish Onions

3 teaspoons of minced Garlic

1 6 oz can Tomato Paste

2 quarts Chicken Stock (8 cups...or if you're me...4 regular sized cans)

2 cans White Beans (I'm not fancy I use cans)

1 can Red Kidney Beans

1 can Rotel (y'all know I'm Southern, right?)

2 cups of cooked pasta (I used Ditalini)

What:

Chop the onions small or large depending on how you prefer onion in your soup and fry with a little Olive Oil in a Dutch Oven. Don't freak about the amount of oil here. You want to make sure that all of this onion will cook and not burn so add more as needed but don't get crazy. Fry the onion until it's tender and translucent. This will take 8 – 10 minutes. Give a dash or 5 of Salt and Pepper to flavor the onion. While your pan is still hot add the can of Tomato Paste and stir around in the onion until the paste is mixed throughout. Cook this for 3 or 4 minutes. Toss in the garlic and let that cook with the tomato and onion mixture for a few minutes more (3-5). Your house should be smelling incredible at this point. Add your chicken stock and beans and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and let the soup simmer for about 20 to 30 minutes stirring occasionally so that your beans don't stick to the bottom of the pan and burn. Now, with the pasta you have two options. You can cook it separately and add it in to the soup for a wetter soup or you can toss the dry pasta in to your pot and let it cook with everything else for a thicker consistency. Either way is fine. Since I'm Southern and I add Rotel to just about everything I tossed in a can of Rotel to add a tiny bit of spice to the mix. I also threw in a teaspoon of Italian Seasoning.

This soup will freak you out it's so good. I hope you enjoy!